

Southside Book Reviews

Reviews Of Books Recently Written By Southside Authors

Compiled by: Forrest W. Schultz 770-583-3258
schultz_forrest@yahoo.com

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Civil War History Books Which Emphasize Primary Source Materials

A Review of:

Carole Marsh *The Student's Civil War* -- 6 books (Peachtree City, GA: Gallopade, 2010)

Each book has 36 pp and costs \$9.99 PaperBack and \$24.99 Library Bound

1st Book: *Who Were the Key Players in the Civil War?*

ISBN: 978-0-636-07639-7 (PB) 978-0-635-07645-8 (LB)

2nd Book: *What Was The Civil War All About, Anyway?*

ISBN: 978-0-635-07640-3 (PB) 978-0-635-07646-5 (LB)

3rd Book: *When Did It Happen in the Civil War?*

ISBN: 978-0-635-07641-0 (PB) 978-0-635-07647-2 (LB)

4th Book: *Where Did the Civil War Happen?*

ISBN: 978-0-635-07642-7 (PB) 978-0-635-07648-9 (LB)

5th Book: *Civil War Trivia*

ISBN: 978-0-635-07643-4 (PB) 978-0-635-07649-6 (LB)

6th Book: *Civil War Resource Book*

ISBN: 978-0-635-07644-1 (PB) 978-0-635-07650-2 (LB)

Reviewer: Forrest W. Schultz

Perhaps the greatest challenge in teaching history is to show the student that history is interesting. Although there have been history teachers and history textbooks which have been boring, this is not because history itself is boring.

If there are any history teachers out there looking for a way to show that the Civil War is interesting, I highly recommend the six books written by Carole Marsh noted above which are collectively called *The Students Civil War*. Their release in September is timely because April of 2011 marks the 150th Anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War. There are already several states which have established Civil War Sesquicentennial Commissions, so that schools will doubtless be encouraged to place special emphasis on teaching about the Civil War during the coming academic year. The books are designed for use in history classrooms for an age range of students from 9 through 14.

The author and illustrator, Carole Marsh, has not only had a lifelong interest in the Civil War and in American history in general, but she has also been informally teaching a good bit of history through her series of kids mystery stories set in various locations throughout the United States, which work a lot of historical knowledge into the stories. Those who have been delighted by these stories will find the same pizzazz in the Civil War books under review here.

A great deal of the space in her Civil War books is given over to direct quotations from the various participants in the Civil War and from letters and newspaper articles and proclamations of the time. This puts the student directly in touch with primary source material, which is usually much more interesting to read than the attempted summaries of these which are found in most textbooks. There are also interesting exercises for the student. One of them, for example, shows a list of all the different names people have given to the Civil War and then asks the student to see if any of these are biased toward one side or the other.

There are also thought-provoking facts presented, such as the one about Robert E. Lee being opposed both to slavery and secession but

returning to the South because he did not wish to fight against his fellow Virginians. There also are interesting facts about the various weapons and about new inventions such as a submarine which was sunk and was not recovered until 1995 by Clive Cussler!!

Carole Marsh is doing in print what *Frank Wildhorn's The Civil War* does on stage -- showing us what the Civil War was like through direct contact with the participants. In Wildhorn's case the primary source material is acted out on stage and presented in song. In Marsh's case the primary source material is presented through quotations in her books. In neither case is there any agenda, such as trying to prove some point or argue some thesis. The idea in both cases is to show the observer what happened and allow him to draw his own conclusions.